



2019–2020 NTSB

MOST WANTED LIST OF TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS



Require Medical Fitness —Screen for and Treat Obstructive Sleep Apnea

What is the problem?

Undiagnosed and untreated obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)—and the fatigue that results from it—continues to be deadly on our highways. Commercial drivers must be medically fit to operate their vehicles safely, yet many suffer from OSA.

OSA is a treatable chronic disease in which patients experience episodes of airway obstruction while sleeping, resulting in fragmented sleep and subsequent daytime sleepiness and fatigue. Because many commercial drivers are older, obese males, they tend to have higher incidences of OSA than the general population.

OSA often goes undiagnosed in the transportation environment, which increases the risk that drivers will suffer from fatigue and perform their duties in an unsafe manner.

Too many commercial drivers with inadequately treated OSA operate on our roadways due to a lack of strong federal regulations addressing screening, diagnosing, and ensuring adequate OSA treatment; inadequate Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) guidance for certified medical examiners; and weak company policies and procedures regarding driver health.

28%

Commercial truck drivers estimated to have mild to severe sleep apnea

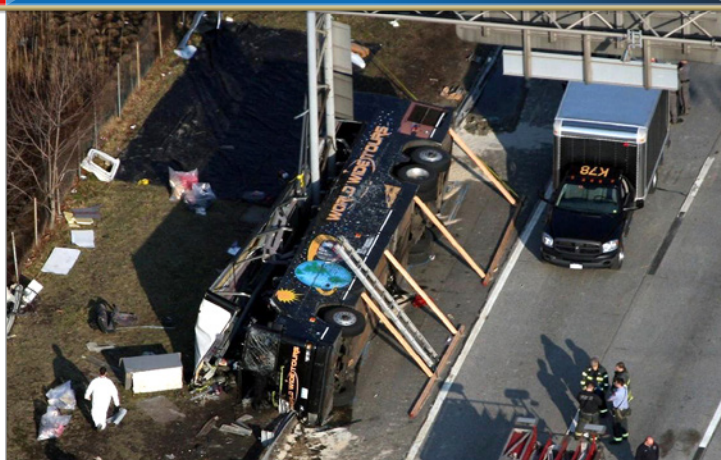
Source: University of PA, FMCSA, ATRI

2x

69% vs. 31%

Prevalence of obesity in long-haul truck drivers in 2010, compared to the national working population

Source: FMCSA



On March 12, 2011, a motorcoach was traveling southbound on Interstate 95, en route to New York City, when it collided with a highway signpost. Fifteen passengers were killed and 18 others were injured. We determined that the driver failed to control the motorcoach due to fatigue resulting from inadequate sleep and poor sleep quality. Photo by *The Journal News*

Related reports:

HAR-18/03: Motorcoach Run-Off-the-Road and Overturn US Highway 83; Laredo, Texas; May 14, 2016; Accident ID HWY16MH011

HAR-17/04: Motorcoach Collision with Combination Vehicle after Traffic break on Interstate 10; Palm Springs, California; October 23, 2016; Accident ID HWY17MH005

HAR-12/01: Motorcoach Run-Off-the-Road and Collision with Vertical Highway Signpost, Interstate 95 Southbound; New York City, New York; March 12, 2011; Accident ID HWY11MH005

HAR-10/02: Truck-Tractor Semitrailer Rear-End Collision Into Passenger Vehicles on Interstate 44; Miami, Oklahoma; June 26, 2009; Accident ID HWY09MH015

For detailed investigation reports, visit www.nts.gov

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What can be done?

Commercial drivers operating on our roadways are generally conscientious and well-trained; however, some employers and federal regulators don't pay enough attention to their drivers' health and well-being. Many commercial drivers are at risk of developing OSA, which puts the public at risk for a crash. Highway personnel in safety-sensitive positions need to be screened for OSA and treated if necessary. When treated, OSA is not a medically disqualifying condition for transportation operators in safety-sensitive positions.

To address the problem of medical fitness, the following actions should be taken:

Operators/Companies

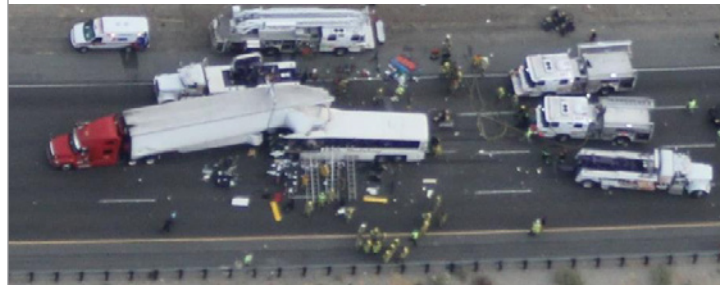
- › Develop a formal sleep apnea program that includes screening, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up for commercial drivers.

Regulatory Agencies

- › Provide drivers and certified medical examiners easy access to more specific, clearer guidance on OSA.

Commercial Drivers

- › Work with qualified health care providers to ensure they are evaluated and adequately treated for OSA.



On October 23, 2016, a motorcoach ran into the rear of a stopped combination vehicle in the westbound lanes of Interstate 10, outside Palm Springs, California. As a result of the crash, the bus driver and 12 passengers died, and the truck driver and 30 passengers were injured. Below is a photo of the damage to the front of the motorcoach.



MWL
MOST WANTED LIST

**Critical changes needed
to reduce transportation
accidents, injuries, and
fatalities**

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The NTSB **MOST WANTED LIST** highlights safety issues identified from the NTSB's accident investigations to increase awareness about the issues and promote recommended safety solutions.

For more information visit www.nts.gov/mostwanted or contact SafetyAdvocacy@ntsb.gov

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation—railroad, highway, marine, and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the federal government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.

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